

ACTING LOCALLY, SERVING GLOBALLY:
GENERATING SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH LIBRARIES
INTO THE NEXT MILLENNIUM

John R. Haak University
Librarian University of Hawai'i
at Manoa

March 1998

As we look forward to the next millennium it seems clear to me that unless those who now utilize our research libraries to carry out their academic work and those who provide the funding to support these institutions are on the same wave length as those of us that direct these libraries, all of our wonderful visions and plans will be as seeds lying ungerminated on rocky, barren ground. Susan K. Martin sounded this warning when she stated, "In reaching for the 21st century, librarians must bring library users along with them. To ignore them will be tantamount to failure, because then our funding and administrative agencies will not understand why we are doing what we are doing." ¹

I met this reality face-to-face when a former chairperson of the Faculty Senate at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa recently said to me, "You librarians are always about five steps ahead of us. I don't know how we will ever catch up with you." Yes, we have an effect on one set of faculty who feel harried by the pace of change we introduce into their research environment and feel we are changing too fast. Other faculty feel alienated because they believe that we have sacrificed support for current acquisitions of books and journals in order to invest in technology. We feel challenged as well, by the expectations of others who feel we are changing too slowly and want us to accelerate our entry into the digital age so they can receive what they want, when they want it at their desktops.

Another wake-up call occurred during a meeting of the Board of Directors of the University of Hawai'i Foundation which was held two years ago in the Special Collections Department of our University Library. During the reception that followed the meeting I entered into conversation

with a number of the directors. Many confessed that they had not been in an academic library for thirty years, most were beginning to use the World-Wide Web, and they were all eager to engage me in a discussion of how everything was going electronic and how we would soon not need to construct new library facilities and support paper-based collections.

The World Wide Web has rapidly advanced beyond the original strands that connected university and government research departments. It now links millions of us world-wide. Popular, commercial, professional, and academic publications push expectations of what technology can deliver. They promote a particular view of what is achievable in the near future, and some raise the question in the minds of readers of the need to continue strong support for a variety of institutions including our local libraries since, as they imply, everything will be on the Web.

Over the past decade and a half as a library director I have had to continually justify support for library facilities, physical collections, information technologies, and the role of librarians in instruction.

However, I was not used dealing with a fundamental questioning of the value of libraries or with technology related alienation. At first I was surprised. Then concerned. Then I knew we had some real work to do to reconnect and to educate.

The Lakota people of North America have a traditional dance in which the dancers move two steps forward and then one step back as they advance around a circle. The teaching inherent in this dance is that as we move forward along the circular Path of Life, it is wise for us to

periodically take a step back to retrieve something valuable that we have left behind in our rush to move forward. Based upon my experience it would seem wise to step back to retrieve the understanding, interest and support of those who have traditionally supported libraries whom we may have taken for granted.

Perhaps the first truth we need to reclaim is that we live in a world of "and" more than "or". I relate to the vision of libraries as expressed by Walt Crawford when he stated that the future means:

print and electronic communication

linear and hypertext

mediation by librarians and direct access

collections and access

the library as an edifice and an interface.²

We must have a balanced view of the future and then develop a strategic plan and program to secure the commitment of support for what we need to retain and for what we need to change. The growing necessity for private fundraising provides a crucial opportunity to build bridges of understanding to our diverse communities.

If there is a trend for the 21st century for research libraries it is that they will be fundamentally engaged in fundraising activities. It is becoming essential for academic libraries to embark upon a systematic program of development to secure additional financial support from donors and other

sources beyond their traditional base. Many university libraries are now well along in making fundraising a priority and those that are new to this activity are working diligently to catch up. One only need look at the advertisements for library directors nowadays— fundraising success is often an essential qualification.

Many libraries are now in the "campaign mode" as part of university-wide fundraising campaigns, with over-all goals as modest as \$10 million and as ambitious as \$1 billion. Such campaigns will have an impact on the fortunes of our libraries and their abilities to fulfill the missions they have set out for themselves in the years to come.

Recent trends in U.S. academic and research libraries, even well-supported private and public institutions, show that many are appointing Library Development Officers to concentrate on fundraising from the private sector and to focus on marketing the library to increase support for its programs. ALADN (the Academic Libraries Advancement and Development Network) was formed in 1995 as the professional support organization for people in libraries who want to develop their fundraising skills and programs. Over 300 people are now signed up on LIBDEV, the ALADN listserv.

About half of the members of ALADN are campus fundraisers assigned to the library, and about half are librarians assigned to fundraising activities in their libraries. The professional fundraisers in the group become educated about library missions, issues, and needs from the librarians, while the librarians learn from the professional fundraisers the value of sound fundraising principles

and tried-and-true methodologies concerning donor prospect identification, cultivation, and solicitation.

Successful library fundraising requires the library to articulate its vision and values, and to expend the necessary effort to develop and maintain connections with campus, community, and alumni. A fundraising effort stimulates the library to take a clear look at its strengths and weaknesses, focus in on its priorities, demonstrate its value, and to develop a personal touch. It requires the library to do the very things necessary to cultivate understanding and support over the long term, most especially at the local level, which for state-supported universities and their related programs is critical.

Our institutions of learning, including our libraries, can avoid a fate of irrelevancy in an expanding global virtual environment, by recognizing what each of us does that is unique and important for the specific communities that we serve and then using this knowledge to build community involvement and support. The greatest success for achieving understanding and support comes when individuals feel an emotional bond, a sense of loyalty or pride, or a feeling of meaningful personal connection. I will give two examples from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa Library experience that demonstrate that we have power within our grasp.

The University of Hawai'i has a Hawaiian, Asian, and Pacific focus that derives out of its geographic location, surrounding marine environment, and the diversity of people and cultures that reside in this family of islands in the heart of the Pacific Ocean. Its academic programs are

attuned to this focus. The University Library is recognized and serves as a unique regional resource with value to the global community interested in the Asia/Pacific region. The diversity that exists today within the population of Hawai'i, and the particular blending and celebration of culture that thrives there, is a product of the age of sugar in Hawai'i.

The sugar industry radically transformed the landscape. It dominated political life for almost a century. It monopolized water resources. It altered the economic system from one based upon communitarian values to one based upon capitalism and the private ownership of land. It created the demand for labor on the sugar plantations that led to the importation of over three hundred thousand people from Japan, Okinawa, China, The Philippines, Puerto Rico, Portugal, Germany, and Great Britain. Although the era of big sugar is over, there remains a profound sense of respect felt by the people of Hawai'i today for the sacrifice and efforts of their forbearers to make a better life for themselves and their families, as well as a certain nostalgia for "community" as it existed in an agrarian society.

The depth of these feelings was made very apparent to us this past year when the University of Hawai'i at Manoa Library received the donation of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association Plantation Archives. The Plantation Archives include corporate records for the plantations dating back to the 1850's, as well as labor contracts with individuals who immigrated to Hawai'i, production records, maps, correspondence, and documents pertaining to community events.

When we held a celebration to honor the transfer of these records to the University Library an exhibit of selected materials was prepared for the occasion. As people passed through the exhibit I could hear their personal stories unfold. The stories came from the University maintenance workers who helped prepare the room for the celebration, from members of the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents, from both federal and state legislators, from members of the faculty raised in Hawai'i; from the minister who provided a blessing for the transfer of stewardship of these records -- everyone had stories to tell about life in Hawai'i during the sugar era. It reminds me of these lines from a poem by Muriel Rukeyser , "The universe is made of stories, not of atoms." ³

The connection between precious memories, the Plantation Archives, and the University Library became very clear and led to a boost of support for the Library that helped secure funding for the new \$37 million dollar addition to the University's Hamilton Library, which will include space for these and other archival collections. The value of the Library as a physical place is affirmed when it is entrusted not only with the physical preservation of unique materials relevant to its physical geography and social environment, but also with the responsibility of providing access to those resources for people from our academic and public communities.

In February 1998, the University of Hawai'i Foundation's Heritage Society held its first event in the University Library. The members of the Heritage Society are retired faculty and members of our local community who have established irrevocable trusts or designated a significant

portion of their estates to support the University. The program for the event, entitled "Preserving Heritage Collections," demonstrated the Library's role in preserving the record of knowledge and experience through its conservation activities.

The members were fascinated. Through the presentation they appreciated that the gift of one generation to the next is the record of its knowledge and experience as well as the effort it makes to preserve the legacy of knowledge it received from its forbearers. They came away from the meeting with a sense of pride and respect for the University and its value to the community. The University Library, as a result of this meeting, received enthusiastic regard for its service, the donation of a valuable collection, and the commitment of additional trust funds from a couple that are new members of the Society.

The special qualities and strengths of each of our research libraries are derived from its history, location, and interaction with the local community. For academic libraries to thrive they must perform well within an environment of constant change. This requires that we know and strengthen ties to the local community and alumni, improve communication with faculty and students, commit to client service, and be good stewards for the knowledge sources in our care. Then, as a natural outgrowth of our local success and the utilization of the fantastic tools and networks that we employ in our service, we can think globally and extend the value of our libraries by reaching out to participate in a world consortia of research libraries. The basis of our cooperation is the sharing of our particular strengths. This is the way of our academic communities, this is the way of the world, this is the way to the next millennium.

¹ Martin, Susan K., "Keeping Pace with the Users," Journal of Academic Librarianship: 20:4, (September 1994) p.225

² Crawford, Walt, "Paper Persists: Why Physical Collections Still Matter," Online Magazine, January 1988. <http://www.onlinemag/JanOL98/crawford/html>

³ Rukeyser, Muriel, The Speed of Darkness, Random House, 1960, p. 111.